

Death From Cigarette-Related Cancer In the U.S. Is Found to Be Epidemic

Medical Tribune Report

NEW YORK—Deaths from cigarette-related cancer have reached "epidemic proportions" in the United States, Dr. Ashbel C. Williams, president of the American Cancer Society, said in a statement.

Cancer caused by smoking killed 75,000 persons last year, Dr. Williams said, and other smoking-related diseases took another 300,000 lives.

Despite this alarming trend, American children are taking up the smoking habit at the rate of 4,000 to 5,000 an hour, he warned. At this rate, 1,000,000 of the children now in school will eventually die from smoking.

Recent Reports Cited

Commenting on two recent reports on cigarette smoking, Dr. Williams said:

"The report to Congress from the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare is a highly significant one. Its recommendation that the warning on cigarette packages should be strengthened and should appear on all advertising is strongly supported by the American Cancer Society.

"Particularly significant in Secretary Gardner's report was the shocking fact that one-third of all deaths among American men aged 35 to 60 are excess because they would not have occurred as early as

they did if cigarette smokers had the same death rates as the nonsmoking group.

"Of far less scientific significance, it seems to the society, is the report of a new cigarette filter, given extraordinary sponsorship by a great university.

"Filters are being developed all the time, and many of them are supported by convincing tests. We hope this is a step towards a less hazardous cigarette, and we would welcome evidence on the biological effect of cigarettes with this new filter.

"However, the American Cancer Society believes the only safe rule today is not to smoke cigarettes. This is a rule that we think will gradually win acceptance...."

"Reducing tar and nicotine content is, we think, important. Available data suggest strongly that the higher the tar and nicotine content in the main stream of cigarette smoke, the greater the risk. The society has long favored the listing of tar and nicotine content on cigarette packages so that those who continue to smoke could choose those with lower tar and nicotine.

"The society is supporting the Magnuson-Kennedy Bill to require tar and nicotine content labeling."

Dr. A. H. Letton, the society's public education chairman, said the tobacco industry spends \$2 billion annually "trying to talk children into smoking."

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